

After Irene **Floodgates Art Project**

After Irene Floodgates Art Project Exhibit Opens Aug. 25 in Downtown Waterbury ***Community-Created Visual Art Collection Brims with Personal, Public Responses to the Disaster***

(WATERBURY, Aug. 20, 2012) – A year after Tropical Storm Irene flooded vast swaths of Vermont including Waterbury and the surrounding communities, a collective artistic reflection has come together and is ready to be shared with the public.

On Saturday, Aug. 25, the **After Irene Floodgates Art Project** exhibition opens in downtown Waterbury in a commercial building at 3 Elm Street that was damaged by Irene's floodwaters a year ago.

The project came together this spring as local artists and community organizers through Revitalizing Waterbury decided to make available literal blank slates for people to transform into individual works of art. They distributed 6-inch-square panels for people to use as their canvases. Three months later, more than 250 entries have been submitted with images created using a wide variety of media – paint, collage, photographs, print and more. Artists range in age from preschool and elementary school children in Waterbury, Moretown and the Mad River Valley to elderly residents working together at the local senior center and many in between. The works are unique to each person's point of view and experience but they share the common theme of the storm, the flood and its aftermath.

Most entries come from the Waterbury-Duxbury and Mad River Valley communities of Central Vermont, said Waterbury Center artist and project organizer Sarah-Lee Terrat. Regardless of which town the artists live in, they each shared their experiences and memories in a graphic and personal way. "So many people told me that they were not 'artistic' enough to do this, but my response was that it didn't matter in the least," Terrat said. "We were looking for a broad variety of visuals, emotions, and stories and that's exactly what we received. Every piece that we have collected makes the exhibit richer and more fascinating."

The space chosen for the exhibition has unique significance as well. The building at 3 Elm Street dates back to 1900 when it originally was a blacksmith shop. Its façade bears a prominent marker noting the high water level from the 1927 flood. A second marker was added to mark the 2011 flood. The property now is undergoing another transformation. The auto parts dealer long on the main level decided not to return after Irene's floodwaters receded. The property also has new owners -- Jeffrey and Maryanne Larkin, proprietors of the nearby Arvad's Restaurant which also sustained damage from Irene, have acquired the building. Without a tenant yet for the space, the Larkins have generously opened their doors for recent art displays including the current Floodgates exhibit.

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Floodgates will run through September with hours on Saturdays and two Wednesday evenings. August dates are: Sat., Aug. 25, 3-7 p.m. and Weds. Aug. 29, 5-8 p.m. In September, hours will be noon-3 p.m. on Saturdays Sept. 1, 8, 22 and 29. Saturday Sept. 15 will feature a special community reception from 4-7 p.m. Also open Weds. Sept. 26, 5-8 p.m. The Wednesday exhibit hours coincide with Waterbury's ongoing downtown Art in the Alley Event Series on the last Wednesday of the month.

Special supporters of this project include Revitalizing Waterbury and the Episcopal Church of Vermont. The gallery space is handicapped accessible. For more information, contact Sarah-Lee Terrat via email: Sarahlee@revitalizingwaterbury.org.

Info. also posted at www.revitalizingwaterbury.org

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